



Klamath Network Featured Creature

April 2008

American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*)

General Description:

Castor canadensis is one of only two remaining species in the family Castoridae. The other species, *Castor fiber*, the European beaver, is present only in Europe. The American Beaver is the largest rodent found in North America and the second largest in the world, weighing 22-75 lbs (10-34 kg) and growing up to 52 inches (132 cm) in length. Their coloring is typically dark, reddish brown but varies from a yellowish brown to almost black. They have a very distinctive flattened, scaly tail. Their hind feet are webbed and clawed, and their front feet are smaller and not webbed. Their aquatic habits are accommodated by valves that can close off the ears and nose when underwater, and a clear membrane that closes over the eyes.

Distribution:

Conservation efforts have allowed beaver populations to mostly recover from near extinction levels during the fur-trapping era in the 1800's. They can now be found throughout North America, excluding Florida, southern California, and southern Nevada. They have also been introduced into southern Argentina where they are thriving.

Habitat:

Beavers are dependent on slow-flowing brooks, streams, and rivers for dam construction, but they also live in small lakes and some fairly large rivers. They prefer adjacent stands of successional growth trees such as aspen, willow, and cottonwood, rather than mature forests. Beavers are also highly capable of altering their own environment by damming streams and other flowing water to create ponds.

Where to see it in the Network:

Beaver are present in Redwood NP, Lassen Volcanic NP, and Whiskeytown NRA. Crater Lake NP officially lists them as historically present, but field crews noticed signs of them near the southwest park boundary last summer. At Oregon Caves NM, they are also listed as having historic presence. They can be confused with the Mountain Beaver (*Aplodontia rufa*), which are present in some of the same parks and are commonly referred to as "beaver." Mountain Beaver are not "true" beavers, however, and have key differences. For example, they have a very small tail and are far more terrestrial than *Castor canadensis*, creating large intricate burrows in moist soil rather than dams on streams.



Wikipedia



www.tightline.biz

Interesting Fact:

When a predator is sensed, beavers will warn others by slapping the surface of the water with their large flat tails.

Behavior:

Beavers are mainly active at night. They are excellent swimmers but are more vulnerable on land and tend to remain in the water as much as possible. They are able to remain submerged for up to 15 minutes without coming up for air. Beavers dam flowing water to create deeper water held in ponds, which provides safety for them as well as a place to construct their lodges and store food for the winter. A lodge is built as a home for a colony of beavers, typically consisting of four to eight related individuals (a pair of adults plus the offspring from the current and previous year). Beavers mate for life unless one mate dies, in which case another will be found. The female can produce one litter of 1-9 individual young (kits) per year. The kits mature and disperse to find mates and unoccupied waterways after about 2 years. The average lifespan of a beaver in the wild is 10 to 20 years. Predators include humans, wolves, coyotes, and mountain lions.

Feeding:

Beavers are herbivores, eating the inner bark, twigs, shoots, and leaves of deciduous trees and woody shrubs (typically the same ones with which they build their dams and lodges). Aspen and willow have been documented as favorite foods, but they will eat just about any deciduous tree or shrub, including birch, cottonwood, and maple. They also eat roots of tuberous aquatic plants, especially pond lilies.

More Information:

Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Beaver